

Dear Neighbors:

It is an honor and privilege to serve you at the Capitol. The legislative session is well underway, and I am pleased to have been appointed Vice Chair of the Public Health Committee by Speaker of the House, James Amann.



Many of you have expressed great concern over our health care system and the need for fundamental change. Connecticut has the highest per capita income in the United States, however at least 356,000 of our citizens do not have health insurance coverage, including 64,000 uninsured children. Inadequate healthcare results in increased absenteeism from work and school, decreased productivity at work and school and increased chances for poor health over one’s lifetime. Insufficient preventative care leads to a greater need for emergency care, which is much more costly and chokes our clinics and hospitals. Our small businesses cannot keep up with the rising costs of healthcare even though many want to provide this benefit to their employees.

There are several proposals gaining momentum in the legislature that would increase access to affordable healthcare and maximize federal matching funds. These include expanding HUSKY, requiring employers of 100 or more to provide healthcare coverage, and adjusting the MEHIP program which is designed to make healthcare affordable to small businesses.

This issue is of the utmost importance to our public health, the welfare of our children, and the growth of our economy. I look forward to hearing from you on this issue as well as other issues. I can be reached at home at 889-6228, at the Capitol at 1-800-842-8267, and by e-mail at melissa.olson@cga.ct.gov.

Keep in touch,

Melissa Olson - Serving Norwich



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Public
Health in
Connecticut

- HUSKY
- Removing the Medicaid Co-payment
- Nursing Home Provider Fee
- Extending Infertility Coverage
- Bonding for UCFS



Public Health in Connecticut



Fighting to Restore Access to Healthcare through HUSKY



With Gary Hotham at Recovery Night

HUSKY provides low cost or free healthcare coverage to children, parents and pregnant women. We receive federal matching funds for every dollar spent: \$.50 for adults and \$.65 for children. As a result of changes in income eligibility, 13,000 adults were to be denied access to healthcare. Over 200 families in Norwich alone would have lost their healthcare if we had failed to act. I am

proud to say that I voted to restore healthcare coverage for these hard working families. Families who lack health insurance wait longer to seek treatment and end up in emergency rooms, which is more expensive than a doctor's visit. Paying for health insurance is a big expense for working families who are struggling to make ends meet, and this is an important support which must be maintained.

Bonding for United Community Family Services in Norwich!

I am pleased to announce that the State Bond Commission approved a \$92,813 grant for United Community and Family Services (UCFS) in Norwich. The grant will help UCFS purchase dental equipment and increase access to dental care for Norwich families and children.

Dental decay is the single most common chronic disease and yet is the most preventable and treatable. There are striking disparities in dental disease by income and, unfortunately, our children are suffering the most. I am proud to announce that our voice was heard and we secured the funding needed by UCFS to increase access to the excellent services they provide to our community.

Working To Eliminate Co-Payments For Medicaid Participants



Reps Kevin Ryan, Tom Reynolds, Speaker James Amann and Melissa

legally required to pay the co-pay. United Community Family Services and other community providers will be forced to absorb the \$3.00 co-pay the recipient does not pay and the state no longer reimburses. This is an unfair burden on Medicaid patients and the community providers who deliver the care. I will be working with my colleagues to eliminate the proposed \$3.00 co-pay.

Medicaid is literally a lifeline for many of our citizens who are disabled, destitute or have no other options for receiving healthcare. Many cannot afford a co-pay for every office, outpatient, and pharmacy visit particularly because they may need medical care many times each month. What makes this proposal more burdensome is that Medicaid recipients are not

With James Gravel at Eastern CT Fire School



Extending Insurance Coverage for the Disease of Infertility



At a Press Conference

work to ensure that treatment for this disease is covered.

The disease of infertility affects over 70,000 Connecticut citizens aged 18-45. The legislature acknowledged the need to treat infertility in 1989 when it required health insurance to offer coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of this disease. In 1989, treatment was ineffective and highly invasive. Since then, there have been tremendous medical advances, and doctors can now provide less costly and highly effective medical care which should be covered. Infertility is a disease for which we have a cure, and I will continue to

Enacting Nursing Home Provider Fees

We know the devastating effects of a nursing home closing. So many of us lived through the closing of Hamilton Rehab just this past winter. The families and staff made Hamilton a home for many of our loved ones, but unfortunately, that was not enough to keep the home open. Nursing homes in our state are in fiscal crisis. The nursing home provider fee would help all of the homes in Norwich and is fully refundable! It works by assessing a per-bed fee, which will be collected in a separate, off-budget account. The fees collected will then be matched by federal funding for Medicaid programs and will be redistributed to the very homes that have patients who receive Medicaid. Every state in New England, **except** Connecticut, has the provider fee program in place. They are reaping the additional resources from the federal government. We must maximize our receipt of federal matching funds and this is a start. I look forward to bi-partisan passage of SB707 this year.



I would like to hear from you 1-800-842-8267 at the Capitol